# We have 20 vowel sounds, and 24 consonant sounds.

**Graphemes = Sound Letter Patterns**

English can be thought of as an alphabetic language consisting of 44 speech sounds (phonemes) which map onto letter patterns (graphemes).

# In English we use graphemes to represent these various sounds (phonemes).

# Graphemes can be a single letter (graph), or a combination of two (digraph), three (trigraph), or four letters (quadgraph).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sound-Letter Pattern  | Grapheme  | Example Grapheme  | Example Word  |
| 1 letter making 1 sound  | Graph             |  b    a  | rub  cat  |
| 2 letters making 1 sound   | Digraph         |  ch    oy  | chop  soy  |
| 3 letters making 1 sound   | Trigraph  | dge    ere  | ridge    here  |
| 4 letters making 1 sound   | Quadgraph      | ough  | through  though  |

Consonant digraphs and trigraphs are not to be confused with consonant blends — which are combinations of consonants that appear before or after a vowel.

Graphemes can be organised into introductory, basic, intermediate, and advanced patterns. Grapheme patterns can be taught in multiple ways. One way is to analyse the individual phonemes and graphemes that make up words, demonstrating how vowel and consonant sounds are represented in multiple words. Adams (1990) recommends the teaching of vowels through onset-rime, stating that vowel sounds are “generally quite stable within particular rimes” (p. 320).

While there are no set rules for what graphemes teachers should focus on first, it is useful to begin with the simpler graphemes, then focus on progressively more advanced patterns as you go.

# Examples of introductory graphemes:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a  |   | e  |   | i  |   | o  |   | u  |
| cat  |   | leg  |   | sit  |   | top  |   | rub  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| p  |    | b  |    | t  |    | d  |   | k  c  |    | g  |
| pet  |    | bet  |    | tip  |    | dip  |   | kit cap  |    | gap  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| f  |    | v  |   | m  |    | n  |   | s  |    | z  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| fan  |    | van  |   | met  |    | net  |   | sue  |    | zoo  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| w  |   | r  |   | l  |   | y  |   | h  |   | j  |   |   |   |   |   |
| wet  |   | rat  |   | leg  |   | yak  |   | hat  |   | Jane  |   |   |   |   |   |

# Examples of basic graphemes:

**Basic vowel digraphs/trigraphs (long vowels, plus short "oo")**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ai  |   | ee     |   | igh  |   | ow  |   | oo       |   | oo       |
| paid  |   | bee  |   | high  |   | flow  |   | moon     |   | book   |

 **Consonant digraphs (basic)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| sh  |    | ch  |   | th  |    | th  |   | ck  |   | ng  |   |   |
| ship  |    | chain  |   | thin  |    | this  |   | pick  |   | sing  |  |  |

 **Doublets (occurs at end of syllable)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ff  |    | ll  |   | ss  |    | zz  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| puff  |    | will  |   | hiss  |    | jazz  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

# Examples of intermediate graphemes:

**Magic E**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a\_e  |   | e\_e  |   | i\_e  |   | o\_e  |   | u\_e  |
| made  |   | Pete  |   | site  |   | cope  |   | tube  |

 **Long Vowel Digraphs (intermediate)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ay  |   | ea   y  |   | ie    y  |   | oe    |   | ue    |   |
| tray  |   | beat   happy  |   | pie    why  |   | toe    |   | cue  |   |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ar  |   | er   ir   ur  |   | or    |
| car  |   | her  bird  hurt   |   | cork  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ow  ou  |   | oy   oi  |   | eer  ear    |   | air   ere  |   | our  |
| cow   out  |   | boy  void   |   | deer  near  |   | hair  there  |   | tour  |

 **Consonant Digraphs/Trigraphs (intermediate)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| “zh”  si   ge   s    |   | ch  |   | ch  |   | wh  |   | tch  |   | dge  |   |   |   |   |   |
| vision beige treasure  |   | school  |   | chute  |   | when  |   | witch  |   | edge  |   |  |  |  |  |

**Double and triple blends**

Initial: e.g. sl-, sk-, tr-, cl-, cr-, str-, spl-

Final: e.g. -lt, nk, sp, -sks

**Introduction to unstressed syllables**

|  |
| --- |
| SCHWA  |
| trumpet across suppose   |

# Advanced graphemes / spelling rules

**There are numerous other useful graphemes and spelling rules, but these will not be listed exhaustively. If a grapheme or spelling rule is not listed above, it can be considered more advanced.**

 **Refer to the morphology section which focuses on the parts of words (morphemes) that carry meaning, including prefixes, suffixes, and base words.**

**Adams, M. (1990). Beginning to read: thinking and learning about print. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press**